

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review -
Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules
and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MM Docket No. 02-277, (rel. Sept. 23, 2002)

To: The Secretary, FCC Commissioners, and Chief, Media Bureau

January 2, 2003

Dear FCC,

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

Please carefully look at the history in many industries in the United States over the last 10 years, in particular banking, hotel ownership, even automobiles. The trend is to merge, rather than compete. We know that when two companies merge, there is immediately one less competitor out there, and there are two fewer companies who were trying to win consumers' allegiance by producing a better product or service at a better price. This may make for greater profits, but there is less diversity and fewer choices for consumers. It is bad enough when the good or service being provided is something like checking accounts, but in the area of free speech, such consolidation should not be tolerated. The government has a role to play in protecting the freedom of various ideas through the airwaves. There is a much more important interest here than just corporate profits. Variety of ideas, and the diversity of them, is essential to our democracy. We are not a communist dictatorship with one state owned radio station. Yet if media companies are put out of business or bought out, the effect will be similar. There won't be state control, but the variety and diversity will be significantly reduced. Please do not allow this to happen.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition, I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA in February 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings in all parts of the country and solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,
Mark E Graham
Davis, California